

THE SAD WONDER

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And He marvelled because of their unbelief.”
Mark 6:6.

THAT Jesus marvelled was in itself a marvel; we never read that either science or art, nature or providence excited His wonder; we do not find that He marvelled at the grandeur of the temple, although His disciples were evidently wonder-struck, for they said, “Master, see what manner of stones and buildings are here!” Little did His mind dwell upon the gigantic size of the stones, or the antiquity of the pile, or the grandeur of the architecture, but His sympathetic soul mourned as it foresaw the destruction of the whole, and of those who dwelt around it; and He uttered the prophetic words, “There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.” I do not find the Redeemer marvelled at the force and majesty of the Roman Empire, and yet it wielded a very remarkable power, an all-pervading and irresistible influence. Out of utter insignificance the Roman Empire had developed itself into a universal monarchy which locked the entire world in its embrace of iron; scarcely a dog dared move his tongue without the leave of Caesar; in every place, whether sacred or profane, the insignia of the empire were conspicuous; in every nation, whether polite or barbarous, the tramp of the imperial legionaries was heard, and the eagles of Rome were fluttering on every hill and in every dale! And yet I do not find that Jesus ever marvelled at all the pomp and energy of the rule of the Caesars; neither do I find that He was ever struck with any wonder by the knowledge of the sages and rabbis of His time, or of any other. There were in His day rabbis who, according to the opinion of their fellow countrymen, were renowned beyond all others. So far as rabbinical literature was concerned, our Savior may be said to have lived in an Augustan period, and yet, however profound the doctors of the law might be, they were very shallow as compared with the Christ of God. No, Jesus never saw any cause in all their wisdom to marvel. There were but two occasions when our Lord Jesus is recorded to have marvelled at all, and both of these were concerning faith. First, he marvelled at the centurion—“I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel”; and on the second occasion, He marvelled at the *absence* of faith where it might have been expected to be found, namely in His own fellow townsmen—“He marvelled because of their unbelief.” In the case of the centurion, who said that he was not worthy that the Lord should come under his roof, he said he relied upon the potency of the Master’s word spoken at any distance to chase out the fever; on the ground that a word from himself was sufficient to command a soldier to obedience, and therefore a command from Christ would call diseases to obedience, too. On the most slender ground comparatively, this Roman, this Gentile, believed in Christ to a very high degree; ascribing to Christ the full power of the omnipotent God—who says to the forces of nature, “Do this, and it is done.”

Jesus, therefore, marvelled that not in all Israel had He found the faith which He had discovered in this Gentile who had comparatively slender opportunity of knowing Him, of hearing His teaching, or of searching into the evidences of His mission as they were contained in the sacred Books. On the second occasion our Lord marvelled at His fellow townsmen’s unbelief. So you see that in both instances it was faith, or the absence of it, that caused Christ to wonder. Ah, my brothers and sisters see the importance of faith; never place that precious grace in a secondary position that can make Jesus marvel! That which seems to Him to be both in its presence, and in its absence, a thing to be marvelled at, ought to be a very great point of consideration with us; it should be frequently thought upon, and always estimated at the highest rate. Have you believed? No man ever asked you a weightier question. Are you still in unbelief? No tongue can ever suggest a more solemn inquiry. Do you believe on the Son of God, or are you yet in

the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, wrapped up in your unbelief? O heart that shall soon stand before Him who judges both the quick and dead let this question judge you this day! Turn not aside from the judgment seat of the gospel, lest you be bound to hear your condemnation from the judgment seat of the law hereafter!

Let us look for a moment or so into what it was, in the particular case of unbelief recorded in this chapter, which so remarkably caused the Savior to marvel. Were not these some of the circumstances? Our Lord had come into the district where He had been brought up, and where He was well known; He had come there, no doubt, with the most generous intentions towards His fellow citizens, willing to make their town His headquarters, and to display His miraculous power in acts of beneficence towards all their maimed and sick. But He was met on His first public appearance as a preacher at the synagogue, with unbelief; and after a while was even ejected from the place, and they even attempted to cast Him down headlong from the brow of the hill where their city was built! No kindly reception awaited Him; cold, impassive unbelief at last turned into cruel, murderous rage! His wonder must have been this—first, He had come here bringing His disciples with Him, each man of them was a witness to His mission; they were truthful men, and some of them were known in the district. They could all bear witness to the miracles which He had worked, to the holiness of His life, to the power of His prayers. He brings these witnesses with Him, and yet they inquire not at their hands as candid men should do, but under the influence of an unworthy prejudice, they condemn the Savior, and deny His claims. He was one of them, they said, and how could He be the Messiah? Thus did they seem to plead guilty to the opprobrious Proverb, “Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?” Our Lord’s teaching appears to have struck them—they were astonished at it, and more, “They all bore Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth” (Luke 4:22), and yet they did not believe! Their attention was evidently awakened, and their astonishment was aroused, but yet merely because they happened to know Him, and because He preached the gospel too boldly, they allowed their prejudice to first raise the question, “Is not this a carpenter, the son of Mary?” And next they rejected Him altogether! They went even further than being struck with His teaching, for they acknowledged that He had worked bona fide miracles; they said one to the other, “What wisdom is this which is given unto Him, that even such mighty works are worked by His hands?” They did not question the truth of His miracles; they acknowledged them to be mighty works; these miracles should surely have proved something, and should at least have shielded the worker from the influence of unreasoning prejudice, and yet they overlooked the overwhelming evidence of His divine works, attested as they were by His disciples, and even acknowledged by themselves! They virtually asked, “How can this be the Christ of God, seeing He is one of our countrymen, and His mother, and His brothers and sisters are all with us?”—a reason which was, indeed, no reason, but a disgrace to themselves, and an ignominious witness to their own infamy!

I have said that prejudice against the Lord Jesus, because He dwelt in His youth at Nazareth, and had been brought up among them, was very unreasonable, but it was the more so because that very fact gave them opportunities for knowing who and what He was! If they knew Mary His mother, why did they not learn His pedigree? They might with but little trouble have discovered that Mary was of the race and lineage of David; they might have found, if they had asked the question, that Jesus was born at Bethlehem; they might readily have learned from His mother those circumstances which were vivid in her recollection, for we are told that she kept them, and pondered them in her heart; they might have heard of the midnight song of the angels, of the visits of the shepherds, of the adoration of the wise men, of the dream of His reputed father, of the flight into Egypt, and all the other remarkable circumstances which went to corroborate the testimony that Jesus was born King of the Jews! They were in the right place to find evidence if they had cared for it, but no, with the candle before them, they shut their eyes or, rather, in broad noonday they groped for the wall like blind men, because they were resolved not to see. What if Jesus had been brought up at Nazareth? What but prejudice could urge that against Him? Was it not an honor to them? He must be brought up somewhere, and being brought up there, they had all the better opportunities for knowing Him; they might have known, and must have known something of His holy childhood, of that remarkable excellence of disposition, of His being found in the temple, of His growth

in God's wisdom, and in favor with God and man, and of the prophecies of Simeon and of Anna concerning Him. Surely some of their matters were talked of by the well, or at the city gates! Certainly, we may be sure that as the early history of a young man is generally known in the village from which he sets out in life, it must have been known in Nazareth, and have been spoken of in many a social gathering, that John the Baptist had declared the Son of Mary to be "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." Surely Nazareth must have become the very focus of His fame, and the people there must have been placed in a position eminently advantageous for coming to a correct conclusion with regard to His person and His office; for all these things to be set aside simply because of a silly prejudice arising from His being brought up among them was such a folly that Christ might well marvel! When all this while they were losing the incalculably precious blessings of healing, and when they were bringing upon themselves the curse of having put from them the kingdom of God merely for an idle prejudice, it was enough to make the Christ of God truly wonder at their unbelief!

I shall say nothing more about these Nazarites, but shall pass on to remark that the unbelief of many here present is equally marvelous in some respects; I am afraid that most of us will come under censure. First I shall address myself *to those who are saved*, who have felt the power of the Holy Spirit within them renewing their natures; and then, secondly, I shall speak to you who are *hearers of the gospel, who, nevertheless, have not believed to the salvation of your souls*.

I. I shall speak to THE PEOPLE OF GOD, and I am afraid while I speak, there will be few of us who will be able to plead guiltless.

Jesus assuredly marvels because of *our* unbelief: He marvels at the unbelief of His own people. Let me show first *the amazing forms of unbelief that are found among the professed people of God*. Yes, and among the real people of God! At times we doubt *the wisdom of providence*; we hold as a cardinal truth that "all things work together for good to them who love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." And yet when the circumstances of our position are dark, and our load of trouble is unusually heavy, the suggestion will arise, "Is this wise? Is this kind? Will this promote my good? Can it be that circumstances so unpropitious shall be overruled for my benefit?" There may be those who have never doubted this truth of God, even when exposed to the most rigorous tribulation, but I am afraid the most of us have foolishly asked the question, "Has God forgotten to be gracious? If it is so, why am I thus? Has He turned to be my enemy, seeing He deals thus roughly with me?" I think this is one of the wonders of unbelief; after the many occasions in which God has proved to us His faithfulness; after the many times in which, especially with some of us, God has overruled our afflictions for our present and eternal benefit, it is of all unbelief one of the most marvelous that we should not be able to trust in the providence of God.

Another strange form of unbelief is *mistrust of the divine faithfulness*. We have the written promise of God that He will never leave nor forsake those who trust Him; we have His guarantee that in His service "as our days so shall our strength be." We know beyond question that we never have temptations capable of making us fall away, but have the divine assurance, "My grace is sufficient for you." And yet there are times when, if we are put to some little stress of labor beyond what is usual, or visible means are straitened, our spirits sink! We become depressed, and the demon of unbelief suggests that now our defeat is certain, and the enemy will triumph over us. "Aha," he says, "where is your God now? Will He stand by you now? Will He enable you to be victorious in this terrible strife?" Happy is that man who can go about his Master's work as sure that God is with him as though he heard the wings of angels over his head, and saw the eternal arm working visibly on his behalf! Happy is that man, but, alas, we are not always thus happy! We doubt because the flesh is weak, and unbelief inquires, "Will He make a table in the wilderness? Will He command the rocks to gush with water? If the Lord should open the windows of heaven could such a thing be?" Yet, brothers and sisters, after what we have seen, and after all that our fathers have seen; after what we have experienced in deliverances, in protections, in supplies, in upholding, and in restorations, the Lord of love may well marvel because of our unbelief! When we stoop to mistrust the faithfulness of God, who cannot lie, and think that the everlasting God who faints not, nei-

ther is weary, of whose understanding there is no searching, can fail to keep His word, and fulfill His covenant—this is unbelief, indeed!

Another very remarkable form of unbelief among God's people is with regard to *the efficacy of prayer*. If there is anything under heaven that I am as sure of as I am of the demonstrations of mathematics, it is the fact that God hears prayer! Answers to prayer have come to some of us, not now and then on rare occasions, so that after a series of years we have a few facts to collate—but they have come to us as ordinary circumstances of everyday life! God has heard for us prayers about great things, and prayers about little things; prayers about things that we could reveal to others, and prayers about secret matters in which none could join us; we have had so many answers to prayer that the fact is far beyond any further question with us, and yet there may be a matter pressing upon our heart for God's glory, and it may be a subject about which we could plead a precise promise, such as this—"If two of you are agreed as touching anything concerning My kingdom, it shall be done unto you," and yet we are half afraid that our prayer will not be heard—the husband afraid that the conversion of his wife will never occur; the wife fearful that that swearing husband of hers will not, after all, yield to the importunate entreaties which she has addressed to heaven; a teacher in a Sunday school class still afraid that his children, though often prayed for, will not be converted! We have many prayers, but how little faith is mingled with them! Well, it is strange, it is passing strange, it is amazing, when we have already been heard 99 times that we cannot trust God the 100th time! And when our whole life is as full of answers to prayer as it is of hours, it is strange that we should go tremblingly to the mercy seat, and scarcely think that God will grant our desire again! No wonder if Jesus should marvel at the unbelief of many of His people's prayers! To kneel at the mercy seat where the blood of God's own Son is sprinkled—where Christ Himself stands as the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and to fear that when we plead for His sake we yet may not be heard! It is a miracle of incredulity!

Another singular form of unbelief is this—a doubt as to *the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ*. I know that this is commonly creeping over the Christian church. The gospel of Jesus Christ will not, according to some, be found to succeed in this enlightened age, or among enlightened nations; it may be very effectual among South Sea Islanders with their dense ignorance; it may perhaps civilize degraded Bushmen in their kraals, but to refined, intellectual men like the Hindus, the gospel avails nothing! Yes and the fear of this has perhaps been up to now a great hindrance to the success of the gospel because our unbelief has restrained the hand of Christ, the Holy Spirit has been grieved, and mighty works have been few. But I will not talk of nations, and of this truth on a broad scale, I will bring it home to you. My brothers and sisters, have you not sometimes held your tongue concerning the gospel of Jesus when you have met with very wicked persons? "No," you have said, "there is no hope there." Or you have been called to visit some sick man of profane life, and you have said, "There is no hope here." Or you have stumbled across some abandoned woman, and have not thought of telling her of Christ, for you have said, "This is a case beyond the reach of the word." But it is not so! I will prove it is not so! Has the gospel saved you, my brother, and you, sister? Then whom can it not save? Ever since the day when I came as a burdened, desponding sinner to my Master's feet, and felt my load roll off me at the sight of His dear wounds; ever since I saw Him as the substitute bearing the wrath of God on my behalf, I have despaired of none—nor would I if they were at the very gates of hell, for could we get the gospel to their ears, and the Spirit of God to their hearts, they would be saved! May God grant that we may not doubt the power of the gospel!

So, too, in hours of great distress we have known true Christians doubtful of the *efficacy of the precious blood of Christ*. They would not confess such unbelief, but it comes to that; they have said, "I thought I was, indeed, one of His; I went up with the multitude that kept holy day, and gladsome were my songs, but I have turned aside; I have backslidden, I have lost the joy of my Lord, and for me there is no hope." We bid such persons look to the Redeemer anew, and we say, "There is still power in the Atonement to take away all sin, for 'the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin.'" For a while, these desponding ones will say, "Alas, I cannot find peace, I cannot get comfort; my sin is gone over my head as a heavy burden, and as David said, my wounds stink and are corrupt, there

is no healing for my sores! I thought I was a child of God, but I am driven from His presence, and I shall know no hope.” But, brothers and sisters, it is not so! While the Bible remains true, it becomes none of us ever to think that we can be beyond the reach of God’s mercy. Jesus Christ came into the world not to save *good* people, but to save *sinners*, even the very chief; He did not come to save the virtuous, but “to seek and to save that which was lost.” “The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick.” Our sickness and our poverty, our ruin and our destruction are proper pleas with the Christ of God; there shall *never* come a day when His precious blood shall lose its power —

*“Till all the ransomed church of God
Are saved to sin no more.”*

There shall still be efficacy in the fountain for cleansing, still be power in Jesus to blot out iniquity.

I might go on and mention some other forms of this unbelief, but I will not—we will rather consider *why they are so amazing*.

First, it is very amazing in saints of God to be disbelieving because of *their relationship* to the Father, and to the Lord Jesus; to doubt a stranger is not at all an extraordinary thing, but for a child to doubt its father, for a brother to doubt a tender, truthful, loving sister, for a bride to doubt the bridegroom who has made her blessed—these things are truly strange. And for me, for you, for any blood-washed soul to doubt your Father God, to mistrust your elder brother Jesus, to have suspicions of the Bridegroom of your hearts, even Jesus, the Well-Beloved of heaven and earth—well may we marvel, and mingle sadness with the marvel! And well may you marvel, and mingle bitter penitence with your wonder! Why do I mistrust my Lord? He has never lied to me; blessed be His name, He can forgive even this sin, but it must wound Him sorely. It must be another crucifixion to Him, that those who are saved by Him should yet doubt Him. Forgive us, Jesus, and help us against this sin in the future!

Our unbelief is a marvel, again, because the rightness of trust in God and in His Son Jesus Christ are backed up by *such wonderful historical facts*. None have ever trusted in Him and been confounded; the Jews of old could look back to a very memorable history, full of great wonders of faith, and so when they doubted God, they doubted Him against all the facts that stood in evidence! When the Lord brought them up out of the Red Sea, and made the waters stand upright as a heap; when He led their enemies down into the heart of the sea where they were utterly destroyed by the embracing waters; when Israel sang a new song unto the Lord, and triumphed gloriously, was not it an amazing thing that within a few days they should ask, “Can He give us bread to eat?” And when after that they saw the manna lying around their tents, and drank of the rock that followed them, and marked the cloudy pillar that shaded them by day, and the fiery pillar that cheered and enlightened them by night—was it not strange that they should doubt whether He could bring them into Canaan, and drive out the giants with their chariots of iron? Israel’s doubts were very strange, but so are ours, for we doubt not only in the teeth of all Bible history, but in defiance of the history of the saints ever since apostolic times—the history of our own sires, and of ourselves! Did the Lord fail his saints at Smithfield, when they sang as they burned? Was He not the helper of those who, but yesterday, in Madagascar, went forth to die for Jesus with hymns of triumph on their tongues? Did not the Lord help the covenanting fathers of His saints in Scotland? And was He not the guardian of our persecuted sires in this priest-ridden land? Let us then yield to multiplied evidences the credence they deserve, and let us trust a faithful God as He should be trusted!

But we have, in addition to the history of the past, *the personal experience of the present*. I used to marvel at William Huntingdon’s, “Bank of Faith”—a strange enough book, by the way, but I am sure I could, from my own history, write a far more remarkable, “Bank of Faith,” than William Huntingdon has penned. And I question whether the life of any Christian here, with its little details of deliverance, of assistance, of answers to prayer, would not be very remarkable if it could be written. At any rate, you and I have had most singular proofs in our experience of the truth, goodness, faithfulness, and power of God, and of His Christ. We do not speak merely what we believe, but what we *know*, and testify what we have seen! I have often said that if anyone wants to dispute with me about the evidences of Christianity, the mere outworks, I might perhaps yield the day; perhaps I might not be inclined to accept the gauge of battle—for I care comparatively little about the outworks. But if any man will attack the real

inwards of Christianity (which few ever do, because they do not know much about them), then the feeblest man among us will hold the wall against all comers! We have certain experiences—communion with the Christ of God, communion with our Father, manifestations of His face to us which we shall not publish in the street, nor cast before swine, but which nevertheless, we would dare bring forward as witnesses, powerful to ourselves, at any rate, and to others who can understand them! Strange enough however, is the fact that after all our inward evidence, and indisputable personal proof, we do nevertheless, doubt in dark times, and scandalously mistrust! After what our Lord has done for us, He may well marvel at our wicked, unreasonable unbelief!

And there is another reason for wonder which I shall mention, namely this, that our unbelief is singular when we consider *our own beliefs*. You do not doubt the Inspiration of Scripture, you Christian people, yet you doubt the truth of something *in* Scripture! You do not doubt the Deity of Christ, yet you doubt whether Christ will be true to you; you do not doubt that His gospel comes from heaven, yet sometimes you doubt whether it will exert a conquering power among the sons of men; you do not doubt the promise, nor doubt the Lord, so you say, and yet you doubt whether that promise will be fulfilled to you! Too often your faith is a *theory*, and your unbelief a *fact*; O that our faith might be a fact, and a practical fact, too, commonly carried out in all the transactions of life! At home and abroad, in joy and in sorrow, may we still be unstaggering believers holding fast by the truth of God, by the certainty of His promise, the infallibility of His purpose, the glory of His gospel, the Deity of His Son, and the triumph of His word!

I close this address to you who are His people by remarking that as you see what forms unbelief takes, it will be well to confess your sin with sorrow; and as you have seen how marvelous it is, it will be right to be ashamed that you should sin so strangely. Before I have done, notice that your sin is so amazing that *it makes Jesus Christ, Himself, marvel!* He is used to wonders—He is Himself the Wonderful, the great wonder-worker, and yet He marvels because of our unbelief! We often wonder at the unbelief of the Jews, that they should have seen so much of God in the wilderness, and yet should doubt Him. As in a glass behold *yourselves!* I have sometimes wondered at the unbelief of others—I have put my soul in their place, and have said, “I never could be disbelieving if I had such an experience as theirs.” Ah, why could I judge others while I am guilty? No doubt these doubters think much the same of us, and think us inexcusable when we are desponding! There are times when we wonder at our own unbelief! When God has brought us safely through a trial, we have said, “I cannot think how I could mistrust Him”; and in the surprising joy of some remarkable mercies, we have looked back with blushes and with tears, and said, “Have mercy upon me, O my God, for my unbelief, for I can never doubt You again.” Yes, it is very amazing; it is very strange that we should be so basely incredulous. May God lift us out of this unbelief, and make us to hold fast His word, and trust in Him without ceasing!

II. I shall now need your earnest attention, you WHO ARE NOT YET CONVERTED, while I try affectionately to speak with you concerning your unbelief.

Among the hearers who continually frequent this place there are a great number who were never infidel in the common sense of the term; and though they would be very grieved even to approach to that state, they are nevertheless infidel in another sense—they are unbelieving as to any saving trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Now I desire to speak to your hearts this morning. Your unbelief is very marvelous, and in each form that it takes it is so! Perhaps you fear that your sin is too great for His mercy. Do you profess to believe God’s word? “Yes.” And yet you dare talk in that way, when it is written, “All manner of sin and of blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men.” “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” “Ah, no!” you say, “that is not the form of my unbelief—I am not in a fit state for the reception of divine grace.” And you believe God’s word, do you? You believe the gospel which I have preached to you so often and yet dare say that? Do you not know that your very unfitness is your fitness? “The whole have no need of a physician, but they who are sick.” “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” You know very well that salvation is all of grace, that from first to last it is all of pure mercy, and yet you talk about being unfit to come! I think I have heard you sing, some of you—

*“If we tarry till we’re better,
We shall never come at all.”*

You know that, and that your present state is the very best state in which you could come, and yet you dare disbelieve in such a way! Shame on you! Shame on you!

But perhaps you say, “No, my doubts are of another kind; I am afraid mine is an excluded case.” And yet after reading the word of God you cannot find a single text to prove that! And you are told that there are no occult texts that do it, for God has not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth, saying to the seed of Jacob, “Seek you My face in vain.” You know the promises, for instance you know this—“Whoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come you to the waters.” You are not ignorant of that text, “Him that comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” You know how broad and unlimited those promises are made, and yet you dare to talk of your being excluded! Did you not sing the other Sunday, when I gave out the verse—

*“None are excluded therefore but those
Who do themselves exclude.
Welcome the learned and polite,
The ignorant and rude;
While grace does not forget the prince,
The poor may take their share,
No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair.”*

I will say that over again—

*“No mortal has a just pretense
To perish in despair.”*

The reason for despair is a mere pretense, and an unjust one; the gospel of Jesus Christ has with a sound of trumpet declared that if you have no goodness, Christ Jesus will *give* you the goodness; that if you have no fitness, you need no fitness; that you may come just *as you are*, and rely upon the unsurpassed and unbounded mercy of the God who made the heavens and the earth—who has Himself set forth Jesus Christ to be a propitiation for sin, in whom, if you put your trust, you shall find instant pardon, and eternal salvation, a change of heart and a renewed life!

Such unbelief as these—I will not mention more, because they are all alike, a pack of rubbish to be thrown out at once—are all marvelous! It is amazing that they should be indulged in by people who hear the gospel! In your case, my dear hearers, they are more than ordinarily marvelous for this reason—because you already admit so much! If you did not believe in the Bible, I could not talk so to you; if you did not believe Christ to be the Son of God, I should not so much marvel at your unbelief; if you rejected all the testimony about the precious blood of the Mediator, I could understand your being unbelieving. But there are some of you who know that Christ is God; you know He is able to save from sin; you know He is able to save *YOU*, and yet you are unsaved, and I marvel at your unbelief because you confess that it leaves you in a state of ruin, and will land you in a state of everlasting confusion! You know you are filthy, and that the fountain is open—why, then, do you not wash? You know Christ will save you if you trust Him; you know He is worthy of your trust. O sirs, why do you not trust Him? In the name of everything that is reasonable, why not trust Him? God grant you may!

Your unbelief is the more amazing because the cause from which it arises is so inexcusable; with some of you, your unbelief is the effect of inconsiderateness; you do not think about it. You believe, but believe superficially. You do not weigh and judge. Oh, is it so? Will you ruin your own souls for lack of thought? You look, as I gaze upon you, to be men and women of intelligence, and can you, with intelligence and education, trifle with your souls? Eternity, eternity, eternity! You know its meaning, and yet can you trifle with it? You are immortal, no flame shall ever devour your soul; you shall outlast the sun, and when the moon has waned for the last time, you still shall live, and will you dare to tempt God’s anger so as to live forever beneath His frown? When a simple trust in Jesus will secure for you a happy immortality—shall you through *carelessness* allow your soul to drift down the stream to the dark ocean of despair?

With some of you it is little more than mere whim which your depraved heart pleads as a reason for keeping from Christ. Either it is the pride which will not let you take salvation gratis, or some prejudice against the preacher, or against a doctrine of the word, or a wish for you scarcely know what—maybe for some sign or wonder. Alas, men are fools when they are wicked! Wickedness and folly are but synonymous terms, and for you who profess to believe so much, to decline practically to carry it out is folly which even the lunatics of Bedlam could not rival! O that you were wise, and would consider this!

I marvel at the unbelief of some of you because it causes you so much grief. It is many months since you had a day of real happiness, some of you; your conscience is so much awakened that you cannot be quiet, and yet there is rest, rest to be had, and you have it not! There is the cup before you, and you are thirsty, yet you refuse to drink! There is the bread, and you are hungry, but you will not eat! I marvel at your unbelief, and the more because you have seen others saved; since you were first impressed, your daughter has found peace, your son is rejoicing in Christ, the friend who sits next to you in the pew has been long ago with his feet on the Rock, and a new song in his mouth—and he has told you it is all through his trusting Jesus, and yet you will not trust, too! O may God teach you to be reasonable, and cure you of this folly! May His Holy Spirit work wisdom of faith in you. It is marvelous that all this while you would be ashamed to say that you doubt anything that God has said; you make God a liar, but would dread to say so! You would not be called an infidel, and yet what better is an unbeliever? For if a man believes, and does not act on what he believes, is he not, if his soul is ruined, even more without excuse than he who had some mental difficulty to plead as a ground of unbelief?

My dear friends, some of you who have been sitting here for years, and yet do not believe—you are marvels to me! Count you that little? You are marvels to many in your family who long since expected to see you on the Lord's side! You are a wonder to devils—even *they* cannot make it out—the power of their spells has amazed even them! You are a wonder to the damned in hell—with what welcome eagerness would they avail themselves of an opportunity to escape from misery, and yet you trifle with such opportunities! You are a marvel to the angels who would have rejoiced over you if you had returned to your Father, and who wonder that you stand at the foot of the cross from Sunday to Sunday, and yet doubt the power of Him who bled on it! You are marvels to the Lord Himself! One of these days, unless you repent, you will be a wonder to yourselves, for this text will come true to you if God prevents it not: "Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish." But I hope better things of you, even things which accompany salvation, though I thus speak. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved! Before the Redeemer was taken up and ascended to His throne, He left this message to us, His disciples, "Go you into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature; he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. But he who believes not shall be damned." Believe and be baptized, and God grant you His salvation for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MARK 6:1-34.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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